

Bert Ely

20

A statement by Bert Ely to the Alexandria City Council

2-24-07

February 24, 2007

## The Relocation of the George Mason Post Office

Mr. Mayor and members of Council, I am Bert Ely, an Old Town resident and business person. I am here today to discuss, hopefully for the last time, the relocation of the George Mason post office, now at Prince and South Washington.

The good news, of course, is that the Postal Service did decide to keep a post-office branch in downtown Old Town. The not-so-good news is that it may end up in a not-so-good location. I need to state at this point that I have absolutely no economic interest in any of the three Old Town locations the Postal Service has considered. My interest in this matter stems solely from wanting Old Town to have the best possible post-office location.

My favorite location for a new post office still is 119 North Washington, the old First Federal office, as this space is especially well-located for both pedestrian and automobile access. However, the Postal Service rejected that space, presumably for cost reasons, and instead narrowed in on two other locations - the Duke and South Columbus corner of the Atrium Building and the old Office Depot space at 200 North Washington.

Of the two locations, I and many others lean towards the Atrium location, primarily because there is a reasonable amount of metered on-street parking near that location, in addition to decent pedestrian access. The Postal Service reportedly leaned towards leasing that space, but now the word on the street is that the Postal Service has determined that it might be too costly to "build out" that space to meet its needs, specifically public and handicapped access. I am not surprised that remodeling that space for a post office is not inexpensive since it was not originally built as street-level retail space.

Supposedly, the Postal Service is now leaning towards leasing the 200 North Washington space. While that location has good pedestrian access and may not be as expensive to build out as the Atrium space, it is the least desirable of the three locations because of its decided lack of on-street parking. As you know, no parking is allowed at any time on Cameron between Washington and Columbus, parking is banned on North Washington in the afternoon rush-hour, and there is no metered parking on North Columbus. While I almost always walk to the post office to pick up mail from a P.O. Box, I know many folks need to drive to the post office.

Although we should all be pleased that there will continue to be a post office in downtown Old Town, I urge Council to ask the Postal Service to either reconsider the 119 North Washington location or to at least go the extra mile, and spend a few additional bucks, to put the new post-office branch in the Atrium Building instead of going for the absolute cheapest location, which appears to be 200 North Washington. Perhaps Congressman Moran can help in this quest. Of course, if worst comes to worst, 200 North Washington is better than nothing.

Thank you for your time this morning. I welcome your questions.